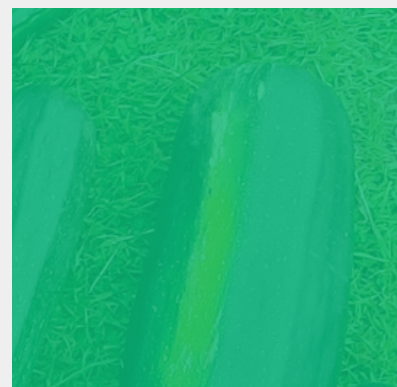
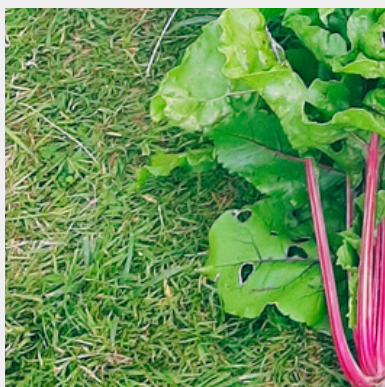
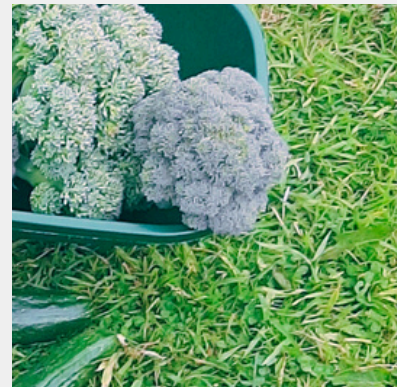


Growing Our Community

Westside Community Organic Garden

An initiative of the Westside
Resource Centre, Galway,
established in 2011



Explore More



Introduction

Background

Westside, a diverse area of Galway encompassing Ragoon, Newcastle, Shantalla, Dangan, and Taylors Hill, is often categorized as "Disadvantaged" or "Very Disadvantaged" by the HP Deprivation Index. Despite these challenges, the Westside Resource Centre has been a key player in community empowerment and environmental advocacy.

Located in Galway, Ireland, the Centre supports climate awareness, human rights, and carbon emissions reduction while engaging over 40 groups annually. To address the sense of exclusion many residents feel regarding broader climate change conversations, the Centre has developed a range of environmental education and climate action initiatives. These include hands-on workshops, community events, and collaborative projects that promote sustainable practices. Among these efforts is the **Westside Community Organic Garden**, a thriving space that serves as a practical example of environmental stewardship, biodiversity promotion, and community collaboration.

Initiative Overview

Established in 2011, the Westside Community Organic Garden has transformed underutilized urban land into a thriving hub of ecological and social activity. This volunteer-led initiative, supported by Galway City Council and other local organizations, emphasizes inclusivity, biodiversity, and environmental stewardship.

Milestones

- **Infrastructure Development:** Installing fencing, accessible paths, and a repurposed Portakabin equipped with a rainwater harvesting system to reduce reliance on mains water.
- **Cultivation Expansion:** Planting fruit trees, bushes, flowers, herbs, and vegetables to promote biodiversity and pollinator-friendly practices.
- **Polytunnel Addition:** Acquiring adjacent land, enabling year-round cultivation and expansion of activities.

Motivation

The project was inspired by a vision to create a practical and inclusive community initiative. Its primary objectives include:

Establishing an attractive, productive green space in an urban environment.

Providing gardening access to individuals without private green spaces.

Fostering community spirit through collaboration and shared goals.

Promoting environmental sustainability by encouraging local food production and reducing food miles.

Key Activities

1. Community Engagement and Events:

The garden has been deeply involved in local initiatives from its inception, regularly collaborating with community groups and participating in events like the **Westside Arts Festival** and **Christmas Market**. These activities have helped establish it as a vibrant and inclusive community resource.

Additionally, the garden hosts an annual **Open Day**, featuring workshops, talks, and activities for all ages, further engaging the local community and raising awareness about sustainable practices.

2. Education and Skill Development:

A cornerstone of the project is equipping volunteers with practical skills.

This includes:

- Hands-on gardening experience.
- Workshops on sustainable practices, such as rainwater harvesting and biodiversity promotion.
- Regular training sessions to build and sustain long-term knowledge.

3. Year-Round Involvement:

To maintain engagement and momentum, the project plans activities for all seasons. This includes indoor workshops during winter months, ensuring volunteers remain connected and involved even when outdoor gardening work is limited.

**Be ambitious
but don't be
afraid to start
with small steps.**

James Coyne

CEO - Westside Resource Center

Outcomes + Insights

Impact

1. Environmental Sustainability:

- Promoted local food production, reducing food miles.
- Increased biodiversity through pollinator-friendly and organic gardening methods.

2. Social Benefits:

- Strengthened community bonds through shared activities and cooperation.
- Enhanced mental and physical well-being for volunteers through outdoor work and social interaction.

3. Recognition: Recipient of the Galway City Mayor's Award in 2022 for contributions to community spirit and environmental sustainability.

4. Educational Impact: Volunteers gained valuable skills in gardening and sustainability, extending these practices into their personal lives.

Challenges and Solutions

- **Limited Resources at Inception:**

- *Solution:* Starting small with planter flowers and gradually expanding as resources became available.

- **Sustaining Volunteer Engagement:**

- *Solution:* Organizing regular workshops, social events, and involving diverse community members to foster ownership and motivation.

- **Navigating Bureaucratic Hurdles:**

- *Solution:* Persistent collaboration with local councils and agencies to secure land, funding, and additional resources.

↑ 2022

Galway City Mayor's Award



Tips for Similar Projects

Start Small

- Begin with manageable steps, like using planters, while mapping out the overall layout. Consider factors like sunlight, shade, and soil quality.

Involve Experts Early

- Engage qualified gardening instructors to guide initial cultivation efforts. This builds enthusiasm and ensures a strong start.

Plan for Year-Round Activities:

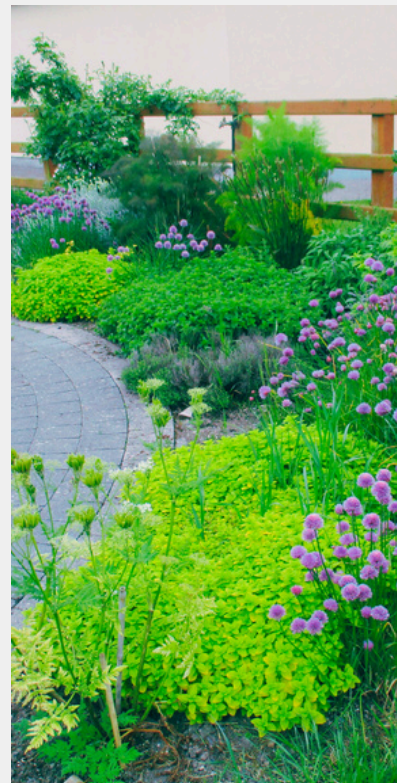
- Include off-season workshops or indoor activities to maintain engagement during quieter months.

Collaborate Widely:

- Partner with local and national organizations to access resources, expertise, and funding. While it may increase paperwork, the broader network enhances the garden's potential.

Focus on Community, Not Just Crops:

- A successful community garden is about fostering connections and collective growth, not just producing vegetables.



Relevant Links

Westside Community Organic Garden:

<https://www.facebook.com/westsidecommunityorganicgarden>

Westside Resource Centre:

<https://www.westsideresourcecentre.ie>

Let's Get Galway Growing:

<https://www.facebook.com/LetsGetGalwayGrowing>

Galway City Partnership: <https://gcp.ie>

Galway City Council: <https://galwaycity.ie>

Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board:

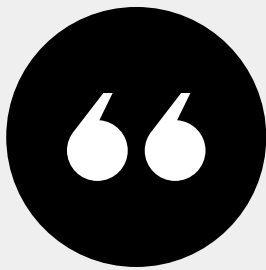
<https://gretb.ie>

Healthy Galway City: <https://www.healthygalwaycity.ie>

Health Service Executive: <https://www.hse.ie>

Conclusion

The Westside Community Organic Garden exemplifies how urban green spaces can foster resilience and environmental sustainability. By integrating environmental sustainability into its initiatives, the Centre provides opportunities for learning, connection, and meaningful action, empowering residents to take part in building a greener, more inclusive future.



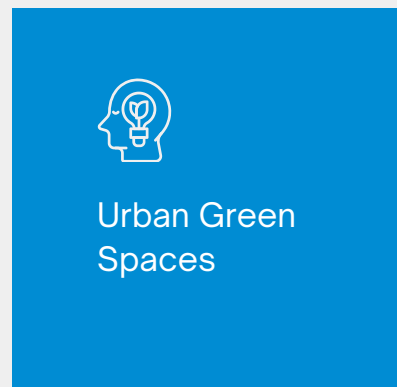
Growing a successful community garden is less about producing prize-winning vegetables and more about nurturing the strengths of your community.

James Coyne

CEO - Westside Resource Center



Community Building



Urban Green Spaces



Biodiversity and Environmental Health



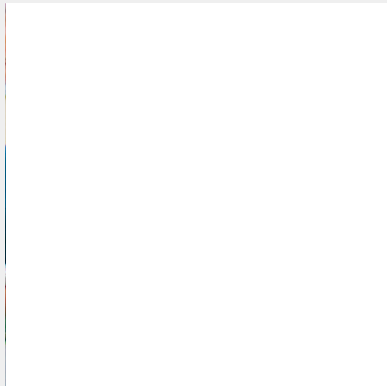
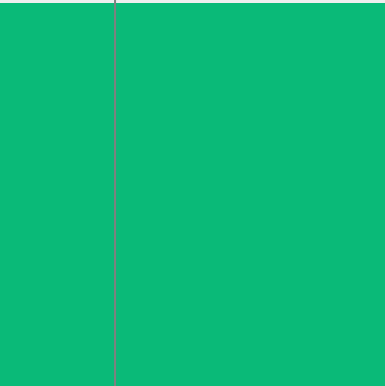
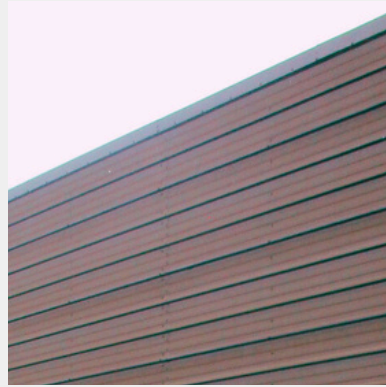
SDG Perspective

The Westside Community Organic Garden aligns with several key SDGs by addressing social, environmental, and educational challenges in its community-driven approach:

- **Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities** – Converts unused urban land into a green, inclusive space, improving quality of life and fostering community resilience.
- **Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production** – Promotes local food production and sustainable practices like composting and rainwater harvesting.
- **Goal 13: Climate Action** – Engages the community in reducing carbon footprints through local food systems and biodiversity promotion.
- **Goal 15: Life on Land** – Enhances urban ecosystems by creating pollinator-friendly habitats and increasing biodiversity.



THE GLOBAL GOALS




November, 2024

Get Involved. Take action.

If you're inspired to contribute to this initiative or to initiate a similar action yourself, here are the contacts to get you started:

 info@westsideresourcecentre.ie

 Westside Resource Centre CLG, Seamus Quirke Road, Galway

 (091) 528325

This story and case study were developed through the 'Connected' project and its partners, highlighting Irish community-driven solutions to environmental challenges. For more details contact a.alexandrov1@universityofgalway.ie